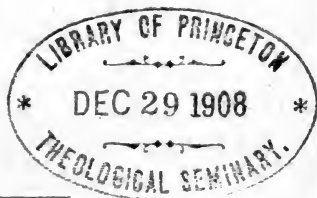


# The Advantages of a Settled Pastorate

BY

Rev. NEWTON H. ROYER, A. M.

Brookville, Ohio



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PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR AT THE REQUEST OF THE FACULTY  
AND STUDENTS OF HAMMA DIVINITY SCHOOL,  
SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

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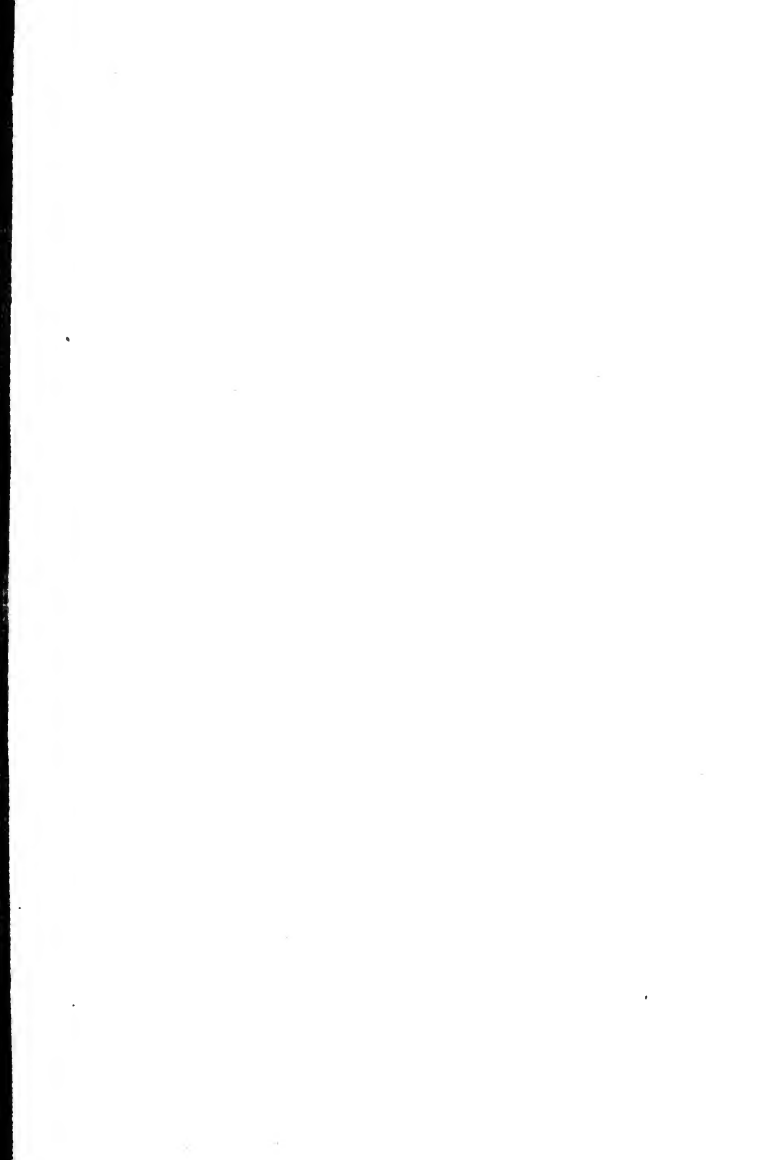
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Sincerely yours,  
Newton H. Royer.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE lecture published herewith was prepared at the request of the faculty of the Hamma Divinity School, and delivered before the students, faculty, and friends, during the seminary year of 1905-1906. It created deep interest, and was deemed worthy of publication by those in attendance. It was thought that it would be valuable in the creation of a better estimate of the value, dignity, and permanency of the pastoral office. Accordingly, by the unanimous action of the faculty, students, and pastors present, such publication was requested.

The author of the address, Rev. Newton H. Royer, is esteemed as one of our most successful pastors, and is warranted to speak upon the subject from the fact that he has just entered upon the fourteenth year of his first and only pastorate.

DAVID H. BAUSLIN.

Hamma Divinity School,  
Springfield, Ohio,  
November, 1906.

# The Advantages of a Settled Pastorate.

IF the Church is a divine institution, the office of the ministry is a divine commission.

The priesthood was no more essential to the edification and preservation of the Jewish nation as a godly people, than is the ministry to the Christian Church, which is the custodian of the faith delivered to the saints ; the pillar and ground of the truth.

The choice of the twelve apostles by the Head of the Church, and the divine selection of another, after the apostasy and suicide of Judas to complete the number, twelve, is sufficient proof that certain men were sent of God to accomplish a specific and important work. These twelve were especially trained by their Master, and what they proclaimed, *ordained ministers to-day are to preach*, but as to polity and methods we find no absolute directions in the Book, which is the infallible rule for faith and practice.

The form of government which may best subserve the interests of the Church in one land may prove to be altogether inefficient in another, and the methods employed in one age may be wholly unsuitable for the succeeding generation.

Our Lord trained and equipped the apostles for their work, and then commanded them, "Go preach," "Bear testimony to these things," but in what particular locality, or in how many vicinities *their witness-bearing was to be accomplished*, their Master did not specify. Those same conditions obtain in our schools of theology to-day. The training, instruction, and equipment, which candidates for the ministry receive in our seminaries are *par excellence* ; but the work of our religious instructors is finished when young men are graduated ; they can but send them forth into the world, as Christ sent the apostles, to preach the Gospel.

The denomination in which our lives have been consecrated does not guarantee any minister a pastorate, nor does it designate precisely where he is to "pitch his tent," or when he is to "pull up stakes." The Lutheran Church permits ample room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the exercise of individual liberty. The Church has a right to dictate in some things, but not in all things. It is the prerogative of our Church to insist that her ministers shall not preach doctrines which are incompatible with the Augsburg Confession, because she believes that the Confession of the great reformer gives the best exhibition and the purest interpretation of God's revelation to the children of men ; but where her ordained servants are to expound the inspired word, to what people they are to break the bread of life, in what particular community they are to devote their lives, is for them to determine, not the Church.



And while the Lutheran Church is not stereotyped in her forms, and gives the largest liberty in things unessential, yet she expects her constituency and ordained ministry to pursue that course and adopt those methods which are in harmony with her polity in any country.

I presume that no Lutheran minister would attempt to defend the itinerant system, for there surely is no more Scriptural authority for an itinerating ministry binding on us than for the setting out of young preachers without trunk, scrip, and purse, although quite a number may be obliged so to do to-day.

In Paul's oversight over the newly-established churches there is no more foundation for a bishopric, as we find it in some Protestant denominations, than was Paul's experience at his conversion, the ground on which we may justly insist that every individual at conversion must experience blindness, fasting, and prostration. The Church was then in its formative period. That was the day of evangelization in a special sense, the day of its infancy. The methods then in vogue are no longer applicable and useful.

The principle of a long pastorate we find in the constitution of things, and the names applied to God's select laborers and teachers all indicate the plan and purpose of God as to the duration of a servant's labors in a given place, such as pastor, minister, shepherd, overseer, etc.

We find nothing in the whole range of the Scriptures,

either in doctrine or method, to support the itinerant system of serving the Church. There are no modern conditions which render the itineracy advisable or desirable. It is true that no ironclad rule can be laid down to govern all men in the ministry in this particular, for there are some ministers who have marked executive ability, unusual organizing capacity, who have the "collecting instinct"; who are more successful in gathering dollars into the Lord's coffers than in edifying believers, who can establish a congregation but cannot perpetuate its existence. When such men have completed the work for which they have peculiar qualifications, it may be wise for them to seek new fields of labor. Undoubtedly there are instances, too, on account of peculiar conditions, that a pastor should resign, even though he has labored but a few years in the charge, but such cases are comparatively rare.

Generally speaking, a settled pastorate is decidedly advantageous, and when you sum up the arguments on both sides of this question, the Scriptures and experience decide the preponderance. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, that the Lutheran Church is on the right side of this question in theory. But why is it that the great majority of our ministers do not serve any congregation more than four or five years? Why is there so much candidating? Why are so many ministers forever looking beyond the limits of their own pastorates, not so much for larger fields of labor, as for taller clover? Why are they not content to settle down in some

pastorate, and leave a definite and permanent impress on at least one locality, rather than to make fleeting impressions on a score? How are we to account for this spirit of restlessness among the clergy? Have they imbibed the characteristic spirit of the age? How are we to explain this disposition among so many to move from place to place? Might finance or personal ambition have more to do with their conduct than a call from on high?

One of the elders of a certain congregation rang the door bell at his pastor's home, and was greeted by the little son. "Johnnie," said the elder, "where is your papa?" The boy answered, "Papa is in his study praying, asking God to guide him that he may rightly answer his call to a larger city." "Well," said the elder, "where is your mother?" "Oh," said the boy, "she is up-stairs packing the trunks to move." Might that story be true of more than one? Is it not a fact that those ministers who are constantly resigning to accept another call, to whom someone has justly given the name, "ecclesiastical hobo," seldom improve their opportunities, and very frequently handicap themselves and work harm to pastorates? There are so many preachers, like children, who imagine that any place is better than the one where they have taken up their habitation, and every time they resign they are certain of leaving Vinegartown and setting out for Honeyville—that they are shaking the dust of a thorn patch off their feet, and are soon to tread the streets of an earthly

paradise. We have heard of some men who boast of their ability to move from one charge to another hurriedly, with the utmost expedition and without much exertion. They have the proper number of boxes of suitable size for all their earthly possessions—from stove polish to their life-size portrait of Luther, who they are anxious shall see as much of this country as possible. Sometimes I am tempted to think that it would be a splendid thing if such men were to be caught up as Philip was, and translated, not to Azotus, but to the New Jerusalem, for they would gain a great deal, and the Church sustain but little loss. It seems to me no foundation can be discovered in the Bible, in experience, nor in wisdom on which to build tenable arguments in favor of short pastorates.

Let us endeavor to ascertain what are some of the advantages of settled pastorates. They are many and important, both to the pastor and the pastorate. First, to the pastor, because he develops more thoroughly, and consequently becomes a more capable and efficient preacher and pastor. A preacher who serves a congregation but a few years will, after his first pastorate, be sorely tempted to visit "the barrel," and to depend on sermons which he previously prepared for another people. His duties in a new field of labor will be manifold, urgent, diverse, and particularly absorbing because of the novelty which a change of environment always presents. He must acquaint himself with the people in the church and out of it; he must ascertain the locations o

their residences ; he must familiarize himself with the disposition and peculiar temperament of each parish-ioner ; he must also learn some of the history of the place, and there are characteristic features as well as peculiar conditions in each community concerning which he must inform himself, and these, with other duties, preclude the possibility of careful and systematic study, and proper preparation for the pulpit.

In a new pastorate a preacher finds himself in the midst of many disadvantages. Every day he spends a great deal of time informing himself concerning matters of which his predecessor had certain knowledge, and because he is not conversant with the history of the people, he misdirects and wastes a great deal of energy which should be given to mental enrichment and the development of his pastorate.

The professor of Greek and Hebrew in Wittenberg Theological Seminary once told our class that if a preacher would not apply himself diligently to his studies "he would soon pump muddy water." The thought which he expressed in figure has its correspondence in fact.

The "dead line" must early come to the man who fails to work assiduously in his study, and that does not mean beguiling the time over newspapers and readable magazines, but hard work. With his college and seminary training for a foundation, if he fail to work out his own system of theology in accordance with the creed to which he has subscribed, his growth will soon cease

and he will be doomed to a premature mental grave. Short pastorates render such study impossible.

But it is not only lack of time, through the pressure of numerous and onerous duties of a new charge, which interferes with the systematic development of the mind. The Scriptures are so rich in themes, so many-sided in their revealed truths, so inexhaustible in their fullness, that the traveling preacher can only set forth and apply a small portion of the whole counsel of God. Besides, the people of his next pastorate are very likely to get precisely the same portion, and by that time it will not be palatable food for the soul so much as spiritual "hard-tack."

Somewhere I read the statement, by one who had the time and took the pains to make the inquiry, that the ministers who have served the same pastorate for a number of years are the ones who have continued their study of Greek and Hebrew. This is right to the point. The reason is obvious, because the pastors who preach to the same people year after year must depend especially on the unsearchable riches of divine truth, and there are only two avenues to the heart of the sacred Scriptures, viz., the Greek and Hebrew languages, and the Scriptures,—these two are the unfailing fountain of all riches to the preacher.

A few years after I entered the ministry, one of my parishioners requested me to preach on the subject of predestination (the ancestors of the person in question having belonged to the Presbyterian Church), and I prom-

ised her the sermon in a fortnight, but instead it was almost six months before I had finished the sermon, and then only after I had examined all the passages bearing on the subject in the original languages. Several years ago another member asked me to prepare a sermon on the subject of perdition. At once I addressed myself to the task of investigating all the commentaries in my possession and found that, on the verses concerning which I needed information, they were as silent as the place itself. Then I proceeded to re-read Dante's "Inferno" and Pollok's "Course of Time." I perused Haley's "Hereafter of Sin," and everything that I could secure that had any relation to the subject, and again, I found that the original languages rendered me more assistance than all other sources combined.

A long pastorate simply drives a man to the study of the original languages if he would preach living sermons to his people. The preacher who expects to remain a number of years in one pastorate will ever be conscious of the deep and varied needs of his congregation. He will anticipate the spiritual necessities of his people, and he will select his themes accordingly, and in their development his heart will be enriched and his mind trained in the relation of truth to truth and doctrine to doctrine, and thus he will become a safe leader and, eventually, an authoritative expounder of the deep things of God, and a man whose knowledge the people will respect and to whom they will look with confidence.

He who preaches to a different congregation every

few years, not only is not so well qualified, but he is like a marksman who shoots in the dark, for it requires as much wisdom to know what to omit as what to present in a sermon.

The settled pastor not only grows mentally, but his influence is steadily enlarged, and this is a tremendous advantage. It is a serious mistake to suppose that a pastor must live in a large number of towns in order to become acquainted with all the various temperaments of humanity. There are not so many in each class, but there is as great a number of human types in Brookville as there is in Chicago, and I have just as many opportunities for the study of men, women, and children, as a pastor has in New York, and the people of a village or town are as susceptible, as capable of development in every way as the inhabitants of a metropolis. It is not a question of place, then, *but of time*, for knowledge of people comes slowly. Acquaintance with the history of individuals or families, of their relations to each other, comes even more slowly, and yet such knowledge is absolutely essential to any minister who would do a work which is to be permanent and who would equip himself for the highest usefulness.

I am altogether certain that the pastor who has faithfully served the same people for fifteen years is far better qualified to continue his ministrations to that same congregation than any other of equal ability, and that he can assume the work of another pastorate with greater



success than the man who has served five charges during the same number of years.

Difficulties have arisen during the last year in my pastorate which were not anticipated and which were different in character from any which preceded them during a ministry of thirteen years—difficulties which could not have been so satisfactorily overcome had it not been for my long experience in the pastorate and my thorough acquaintance with the people and their relations to each other.

To a faithful pastor each successive year will prove to be more fruitful of good than its predecessor, and the reasons are not far to seek. The cumulative strength, the disciplined mind, the solution of many problems of a varied nature, the increased knowledge of human character, the thorough acquaintance with local conditions which a settled pastorate gives to any preacher who works and studies, is the answer to the whole matter.

A settled pastorate is advantageous also in this, that it develops the ability of a man to adapt himself to the changing conditions of his pastorate and the community in which he labors. All the methods which are successful in one pastorate are never equally useful in another. Vicinities and congregations differ of necessity, and the elements which differentiate one congregation from another may require years to master and control. It is also true that the same community and pastorate change vastly. The methods which were quite successful dur-

ing the first years of my ministry are no longer adequate in the same congregation. The same principles are operative, but their expression has materially changed. Thus I have had to learn to adapt myself and my methods to the changing conditions of the passing years. Through long years in the same pastorate a minister better learns how to lead his flock, how to direct the work of the Master, to meet emergencies, to supply needs, and to be an efficient overseer.

Again, a settled pastorate teaches a pastor self-control and discretion. I do not mean adroitness, but a sincere judiciousness. He will eventually learn that, if he hopes to exercise a salutary influence, he must not only be as ingenious as a spider and as diligent as an ant, but also as harmless as a dove and as wise as a serpent.

In a pastorate and community there is no clerical requisite so telling, no qualifications so confidence-inspiring, no acquirement so indispensable for holding the respect of the people, and the successful accomplishment of the work of the Lord, as self-control, restraint, and balance. The ministerial rover will suffer little as the result of his imprudent conversation and his indiscreet conduct because it requires some time for opposition to crystallize against a pastor, and by that time the ecclesiastical wanderer has packed his effects and gone to scenes of fresh troubles. But when a minister preaches to a congregation to-day with the consciousness that he will, in all probability, proclaim the gospel to the same people ten years hence ; when he makes a

pastoral call feeling in his heart that he is likely to enter that home many years afterward, he will be very cautious as he mingles with the people in any of the very many possible relations, he will guard his tongue, watch his acts, even his facial expressions, lest he leave a deleterious impression upon the hearts of the people whom he has been commissioned to bless.

Another benefit of a settled pastorate is the purification of a preacher's purposes and the sanctification of his incentives. The "new minister" in a pastorate has no difficulty in securing a large audience and gaining the attention of the congregation. He will be the outstanding man of the community for several months, while there is nothing novel about the old pastor whose presence creates no stir, no comment, no temporary increase in attendance. He may be tempted to think that he would be more useful and diligent in another charge, but such temptations are to be withstood, remembering that a new broom sweeps well. Prompted by curiosity, large numbers may go to hear a strange minister, but such motives early cease to actuate, and if the people continue regularly to attend the house of God, it is not because he is a new comer, but a faithful preacher of the word. When once the novelty of the minister wears off and the curiosity of the people wanes, when the strangeness of his voice ceases to fascinate, and the congregation becomes accustomed to his presence in the pulpit and in their homes, then he cannot help but realize that his own faithfulness and honesty, and

the purity of his preaching, must be depended upon to make him a successful ambassador.

The long-time pastor will frequently be reminded that his motives need rectifying if they have been selfish and unworthy, for unless his purposes are beneficent and his motives generous, he cannot long hold the respect of the people and enjoy their support. The constituency of a pastorate or community not only becomes acquainted with the chief traits of the minister's character, but eventually they come to know his reason for doing things—his inner life.

Laziness, irritability, adroitness, selfishness, avarice, slovenliness, indifference to financial obligations, these cannot be successfully covered from the knowledge of the people by a pastor who walks in and out before them for many years ; they gradually learn to know him as he is. A man of doubtful character and questionable motives may manage to remain in almost any pastorate for a few years, but if he is wrong at heart the fact will make itself manifest. He must ring true if he hopes to prolong his labors through the years in one place.

A long pastorate also gives a minister stability of purpose, and develops sagacity. With rare exceptions a renter will not exercise the same care of a building as an owner. He will not keep the fences in as good repair ; he will not be so particular about the proper cultivation and enrichment of the soil as if he owned the farm himself. In all likelihood he will plow around a stump instead of digging it out ; he will lay the scythe

to noxious weeds in lieu of extirpating them. Recently, I heard a farmer say that he could determine whether or not the man whom he employed by the month intended to apply for work the next year by the manner in which he performed his labor.

When the short-time pastor anticipates an unpleasant event, when he feels that trouble is brewing, he will be sorely tempted to postpone the crisis, if possible, so that his successor will have something to occupy his time and develop his sagacity and judgment ; and, "for the sake of his wife's health," he seeks a new climate about forty miles east or west of the coming tempest. But when a man has settled down in a pastorate he endeavors to counteract disruptive influences ; he prepares to meet any inevitable crisis, even emergencies do not take him wholly unawares. Such a man not only makes the most of the present, but he is not forgetful of the future, and accordingly he formulates his plans for the erection of a new church edifice, or the remodeling of the present structure if needed. He keeps in touch with the best methods, and employs them in the different departments of his work ; he looks after the varied interests of the pastorate ; he directs the nurture of the young, quickly reclaims the erring, and never ceases to warn the unwary. In short, he considers the interests and well-being of his people rather than consult his own pleasure and advantage. Hence, what to the settled pastor becomes a steadfast purpose, to the itinerant is a dangerous and pressing temptation. It is therefore obvious

that the advantages of a long pastorate to a minister can scarcely be exaggerated because it affords him the best opportunities for study, for the development of resourcefulness, self-control, and all those qualifications which are so essential to a successful ministry.

Let us now consider the advantages of a settled pastorate to the pastorate itself. To the congregation the frequent change of pastors is injurious. It is in the nature of a breaking up, a small revolution.

The selection of a new pastor is a serious responsibility, and often a grievous disappointment. It is usually a difficult thing for a people to adjust themselves to the peculiarities in thought, delivery, mannerisms, and methods of a new pastor two or three times every decade. The frequent change of pastors in a congregation is much like the employment of a different contractor every month while a building is in process of erection.

A congregation will not grow numerically nor spiritually, the flock will not hold together, the fold will have little attraction for those without, when the voice of the shepherd is ever strange. Neither can a new pastor lead the sheep into the richest pastures, because they will follow him with reluctance, at a distance, if not with suspicion.

A long pastorate enables the people to repose their confidence in their spiritual leader, for confidence is a plant of slow growth.

When once the people have witnessed their minister

carry himself through circumstances which try one's faith, without losing his poise, patience, and charity ; when once he has been repeatedly tested in the midst of the most tempting situations before their very eyes, and has not failed, then they will believe in him, and it is wonderful to what lengths they will trust him. All this is an incalculable advantage to a pastorate. It saves it from many difficulties and dangers, and frequently from dissension and disruption.

Nothing can be more encouraging to a pastor's heart than to behold the unmistakable evidences of the absolute confidence of his people in his wisdom, integrity, and fidelity to conviction. But the price of such encouragement is long hours of study, unfaltering faith in God, unfailing love, and untiring efforts for the welfare of his people through many years. How helpful to a people is the continued acquaintance of a pastor with their individual and family life. During a few years it is possible to learn the names of all the members of a pastorate, but years and years of time are required for a man to become so well acquainted with the disposition and history of a family that he will be able to understand much that is unintelligible to the ordinary observer. He learns to be more sympathetic and charitable than a new pastor could possibly be, not knowing what is perfectly clear to him. For this reason a long-time pastor can mollify the asperities and modify the grievances of his people ; and frequently he can adjust their differences, and, by proper explanations, divert those un-

pleasantnesses which misunderstandings so often bring. He who has served the same congregation for many years is enabled to see every new situation in the light of history, so that he knows what plans to pursue, what measures to adopt, and what factors to introduce. Because he is familiar with the chief joys and sorrows, he knows precisely how to direct the conversation, what counsel to give, what knowledge to impart, and what to leave unsaid.

Think, too, of the tremendous advantage of a settled pastorate to the children. Their pastor becomes acquainted with them from infancy. He is one of the first to enter the home, at the altar he baptizes them into Christ, in the catechetical class he instructs them in the things of God, he confirms them, officiates at their marriage, and stands in the same relation to their children and their children's children.

Last spring I confirmed the first catechetical class, the members of which I baptized in their infancy, and it was a rare pleasure, a satisfaction which can never come to the man who is ever seeking new fields of labor. It is but natural that the pastor who has taken the lambs in his arms, who has fed them the milk of God's word, who has jealously guarded them against enemies, is better qualified to minister to their needs during the years of their maturity. Then, too, such a pastor can secure unity of purpose in a congregation. By virtue of his continued instruction from the pulpit and his influence in the home, the people become increasingly like-



minded, and in unity there is great executive strength as well as marvelous attractive power—both of which work mightily for the upbuilding of the Church.

It is to the congregation's inestimable advantage that the pastor should remain until he becomes a part of the people, inseparably linked with their inner lives, identified with all their dearest interests. Unless his ministry extends over a number of years, he will leave them much as he found them in their way of thinking, believing, and doing.

There is no real reason for surprise that some of our churches hold unscriptural views and that many of their practices are un-Lutheran when we remember that during the past twenty-five years they have had almost as many pastors who resigned before they had become fully conversant with the conditions and needs of the people. Let a pastor once serve a people until he gains their implicit confidence and he can lead them whither he wills. He can introduce any reasonable methods, disabuse their minds, correct their erroneous practices, and, if he has proved himself to be a worthy and able leader, he can revolutionize the whole organization.

The mere fact that a pastor is quite well known in a community is a decided advantage to a congregation in many ways. He will be asked to officiate at weddings, his services will be secured at funerals by those who are not identified with any church, for the sole reason that he is known, and through such ministrations his influ-

ence is strengthened and people are persuaded to unite with the church. When a sincere preacher walks circumspectly before hundreds of people year after year, when his mental capacity has been tested, his motives scrutinized, his purposes analyzed, and his usefulness proved, criticism is disarmed, and, while the whole community is enriched by his service, his own congregation reaps a particular benefit. When once the whole community regards a minister as a public servant, as a friend of its present and future well-being, when it looks to him for leadership (as it never does to a new-comer) and authority on all those things which concern the public weal, it cannot help but be attracted to his pulpit and feel kindly toward his people.

At the time when a pastor first assumes the duties of a new pastorate he is regarded as "*the minister*," and it is not until the people of the community come to think of him as "*a citizen*" that he can mingle with men in public matters, that he will be able to create sentiment in favor of the right issue in municipal affairs. Many years of service in one pastorate, therefore, means prestige, and prestige means influence, and the greater the influence which a pastor can wield in a community the greater are the benefits which must accrue to the church of which he is pastor.

That the settled pastor is a man of large influence is proved by such men as Richard Storrs, Theodore Cuyler, Charles Parkhurst, Joseph Seiss, Washington Gladden, who remained long enough in one parish for

the world to find out where they were. To all of us Beecher and Plymouth are inseparable names. You cannot point to a man of national reputation and influence who belongs to a denomination having the itinerant system, except bishops, as John H. Vincent, and he because he is a bishop permanently.

The idea, prevalent among some ministers, that a young preacher should first seek a small parish and there practice for a few years, then seek a larger field and do some more selfish practicing, then under pretense of another call from the Holy Spirit make another sudden motion toward a more populous town, is a principle which, it seems to me, is unwise, un-Lutheran, unscriptural. The population of a town is by no means to be regarded uniformly as the true measure of a pastor's ability and influence. It is rather the size and the piety of his congregation which determine these. The people of any community have practically the same desires, needs, and capacities, so that it ought to be the determined purpose and the holy ambition of a pastor to build up a large and righteous congregation, no difference where he may be laboring.

If a man has the indomitable will, the tireless energy, and the unreserved consecration, he can not only build up a congregation numerically, but he can develop his people in liberality, loyalty, piety, intelligence, culture, and refinement. He can cultivate their taste for any and every thing that is uplifting and edifying, and he can fashion them according to any type.

As to how long a minister should remain in one pastorate depends, for the most part, not so much on the congregation as upon the pastor's ability, his diligence, sincerity, discretion, and faithfulness.

It matters very little where he labors, but the pastor must work with a contented mind, for he can never be at his best with one eye open for a more pleasant parish, than the deacon's wife can be attentive to morning prayer while counting the number of new hats in the congregation.

If you would do a work which shall survive the years of your own life, if you would stamp your own personality on the world as a servant of the Most High, if you would do your utmost to assist in the spiritualizing of humanity, then be not as anxious to "get up" in the world as to "build up" in the most holy faith those who are committed to your oversight.

Again I say, it is not where you are that is of cardinal importance, but what you are doing where you are.



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